UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1997/432
4 June 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE GROUP OF MILITARY OBSERVERS ATTACHED TO MINUGUA

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1094 (1997) of 20 January 1997, by which the Council decided to authorize for a three-month period the attachment to the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA)* of a group of 155 military observers and requisite medical personnel for the purpose of verification of the Agreement on the Definitive Ceasefire signed at Oslo on 4 December 1996 by the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) (see S/1996/1045, annex).

2. By the same resolution, the Security Council requested me to keep the Council fully informed on the implementation of the resolution and to report on the conclusion of the military observer mission.

3. Under the concept of operations envisaged in my report of 17 December 1996 (see S/1996/1045, para. 11) and with the Council's concurrence (see S/1997/91 and S/1997/92), I appointed Brigadier-General José B. Rodriguez Rodriguez (Spain) as Chief Military Observer of the military observer group, under the overall authority of the Head of Mission.

4. Of the 155 authorized personnel, 132 military observers from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, Norway, the Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, the United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela were deployed to the Mission area. In addition, 13 medical personnel from Austria, Germany and Singapore served in the Mission (see annex I).

---

* Since renamed United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

97-12804 (E) 060697

/...

II. VERIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

5. The verification requirements arising from the Agreement included verification of the parties' compliance with the ceasefire, separation and concentration of the respective forces and disarmament and demobilization of the former URNG combatants. The military observer group's related activities are described below.

A. Ceasefire

6. The Agreement provided that the formal ceasefire would enter into force as of 0000 hours on D-day, that is, the date on which the United Nations military observer group, as the verification authority, was ready to assume its responsibilities. On 13 February 1997, I informed the Security Council (see S/1997/123) that the operation it had mandated could begin on 3 March 1997, following completion of the preparatory work for the deployment of the group and the establishment of the URNG assembly points. Until then, the parties maintained the informal ceasefire that they had observed since 19 March 1996.

7. On D-15 (16 February 1997), URNG provided information (numbers and names) on 3,570 personnel to be demobilized. It also provided an inventory of the weapons, explosives and mines in its possession and information on the location of remaining minefields. With a view to eliminating duplications and discrepancies in the lists of personnel, additional information was requested by and provided to the military observer group by URNG. The Guatemalan Army, for its part, provided the requisite list of units that were to be redeployed to their bases.

8. On D-10 (21 February 1997), members of the military observer group were deployed to the six verification centres (Finca Sacol, Finca Claudia, Finca Las Abejas, Tululché, Tzalbal and Mayalán) responsible for monitoring the eight URNG assembly points. In addition, two sector headquarters and a main headquarters were set up to provide command and control.

B. Separation and concentration of forces

9. The separation of forces between the Guatemalan Army and URNG was carried out through the establishment of two concentric areas around each URNG assembly point. Army units were not permitted to enter an inner 6-kilometre-wide "security zone" and police units could only do so after coordinating their movements with the military observer group. In the outer 6-kilometre "coordination zones", both the Army and the police were required to coordinate their movements with the military observer group. In accordance with the Agreement, Army units were required to abandon the security zones by D+10, and units in the coordination zones had to be monitored.

10. The full schedule of Army units' movements was provided to the military observer group on D-10. As a gesture of goodwill, Army units vacated the security zones before D-day. This was duly verified by United Nations military observers.

11. As Army units left the security zones, URNG troops moved to the assembly points according to a plan presented to the military observer group on D+2 (5 March 1997). In order to facilitate control and coordination, as well as to foster confidence between the military observers and the personnel of URNG, the following agreements were concluded with URNG:

(a) United Nations military observers would meet the URNG columns three to four days before the planned day of their movement and would live with them until their arrival at the assembly points;

(b) The larger columns would be split into groups of not more than 200 former combatants and their dates of departure would be staggered in order to facilitate transportation, security and control;

(c) An advance party of URNG personnel would be dispatched to each assembly point three to four days before the arrival of the first column in order to provide security and to prepare for the arrival of their colleagues.

12. A total of 25 columns were organized. By D+21 (24 March 1997), all of them had completed their move to the assembly points.

13. It will be recalled that, under the ceasefire agreement, all URNG regular and irregular forces, as well as its command, policy, security, intelligence, logistics and medical units, were to be concentrated. However, since the total number of URNG personnel assembled in the eight camps did not exceed 2,928, questions arose with regard to the 642 who appeared to be missing from the 3,570 on whom information had been provided on D-15 (see para. 7 above). Following a detailed explanation of the discrepancy by URNG and a technical report by the military observer group, the number of personnel present in the camps was eventually deemed acceptable and the concentration was considered completed on 24 March 1997 (see annex II).

14. A Logistical Support Commission, coordinated by MINUGUA, with the participation of the two parties and representatives of the Organization of American States (OAS), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Union (EU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) provided support to URNG personnel during their stay in the assembly points. A number of national and international governmental and non-governmental organizations were called upon to implement literacy, medical and dental care programmes, as well as vocational counselling.

15. The United Nations military observer group provided medical assistance and transportation to URNG members to and from medical facilities whenever cooperating agencies were unable to do so. Humanitarian support was also provided on occasion to members of local communities in the vicinity of the verification centres.

16. Logistical support for the United Nations military observers at both headquarters and the verification centres was coordinated through the military observer group and provided by MINUGUA administrative staff.

17. In order to assist in implementing the Agreement on the basis of the integration of URNG into the political life of the country, provisional identification cards were issued by the military observer teams to the 2,928 concentrated URNG members. In addition, identification cards were issued to an additional 1,258 URNG members who were not required to be concentrated as they did not belong to any of the categories mentioned in paragraph 13 above. The remainder of eligible URNG members who were not required to be concentrated will be documented by MINUGUA personnel following the repatriation of the military observer group. Samples of the identification cards issued by the military observer group were sent to the Ministry of the Interior of Guatemala.

18. As provided for under the Agreement, URNG members were permitted to leave the assembly points in order to receive medical care, hand over clandestine stores of arms and locate and clear minefields. Whenever this happened, they were accompanied and their activities monitored by United Nations military observers.

19. In order to ensure that non-authorized URNG personnel, government military units or police units were not present in the security and coordination zones, as well as to gain the confidence of the population, the military observer group established an intensive schedule of helicopter and foot patrols.

20. As envisaged by the Agreement, two United Nations military observers were attached to each of the Guatemalan Army units subject to verification throughout the 60-day period.

C. Disarmament

21. As former combatants concentrated in the assembly points, their weapons, munitions, explosives, mines and related military equipment were registered and handed over to the United Nations military observers for storage in special containers and explosive dumps (see annexes III and IV). Each container was equipped with two locks, with one key held by the commander of the United Nations verification centre and the other by the URNG official in charge of the assembly point. In accordance with the Agreement, URNG members were allowed to retain their personal weapons until their final demobilization.

22. Transportation of URNG explosives was deemed to pose a significant risk owing to their unknown condition, the location of the caches, the lack of adequate communications and the inherent danger of ground transportation. To diminish those risks, a special agreement was concluded with the Government and URNG to the effect that all mines, grenades and other explosive devices or material would be destroyed *in situ*.

D. Mine clearing

23. Although demining was not foreseen in the Agreement, URNG helped to identify and clear all its minefields, in particular that located on the Tajumulco Volcano (department of San Marcos). The Government and the United Nations military observer group provided the necessary support to the operation.

Upon its completion, on 18 April 1997, 378 mines and explosive devices had been lifted and destroyed.

24. While both parties have stated that the country is now free of minefields, the presence of unexploded ordnance (grenades, bombs, mortar rounds, etc.) left around the country in the wake of 36 years of internal conflict still poses a risk to the population in some areas.

E. Demobilization

25. The demobilization of URNG was carried out according to the phased approach established in the Agreement. One third of the concentrated former combatants were demobilized every six days, beginning on D-43 (15 April 1997) and ending on D+60 (2 May 1997). On 2 May, a public ceremony was held at the verification centre at Sacol (department of Petén) with the participation of the two parties and representatives of the Governments and organizations that had contributed financially to the demobilization process. Demobilization certificates were issued to each former combatant upon leaving the assembly point.

26. Four shelters were set up at the former assembly point at Tululché I (department of Quiché) and the others at locations in the departments of Quetzaltenango, Retalhuleu and Alta Verapaz to house those URNG former combatants who could not return to their communities. These shelters provide lodging and the infrastructure necessary to carry out vocational training and other reintegration projects. A delay in the preparation of the shelters obliged some URNG personnel to remain at a former verification centre for almost two weeks.

27. Similarly, some demobilized combatants originating from the Ixcán Grande Cooperative (department of Quiché) were forced to return to the assembly points after their presence was rejected by members of their communities. The Logistical Support Commission has assumed the responsibility of providing support to these persons, who have now been relocated to the Tululché I shelter.

28. With the exception of Tululché I, all the verification centres and assembly points have now been dismantled. The equipment and materials will be used by the URNG foundation for the reintegration of former combatants for the completion of the shelters or will be distributed to the communities that had permitted the assembly points to be established on their grounds.

F. Handover of weapons, munitions, explosives and equipment

29. On 14 May 1997, URNG weapons, munitions and equipment, as well as the lists of destroyed explosive devices, were delivered to the Ministry of the Interior of Guatemala. The corresponding handover certificate was signed by the Minister concerned, on behalf of the Government of Guatemala, and by the Chief Military Observer, on behalf of the military observer group, as the verification authority. This last act signalled the completion of the mandate of the military observer group.

G. Violations

30. Six complaints of alleged violations of the accords were recorded by the military observer group. Of these, five were confirmed. Three of those violations were cases of unauthorized presence in the security and coordination zones, which were deemed to be unintentional and were resolved on the ground, and two were wilful but minor violations of the ban on political propaganda during the concentration of forces. The sixth complaint, which related to three armed attacks on an army post, was fully investigated. It was not possible, however, to determine the origin of the attacks.

H. Redeployment and repatriation

31. Repatriation of the members of the United Nations military observer group began on 17 May 1997. A rear party remained at headquarters in the capital until 27 May, when the last United Nations military observers departed Guatemala.

III. OBSERVATIONS

32. The exemplary manner in which the Agreement on the Definitive Ceasefire was implemented is above all a testimony to the determination of both the Government of Guatemala and URNG to put an end to the bitter armed conflict between them. The absence of any major incident during the entire process confirmed what had already been demonstrated by the flawless observance of the informal ceasefire since 19 March 1996, namely, that in addition to their leadership, the combatants on both sides were convinced that the time for military confrontation was over. This conviction is an invaluable asset as the country embarks on the complex process of post-conflict peace-building. The mutual confidence gained in the joint implementation of the ceasefire is no doubt an important political capital that both parties can draw on in the months to come as they face the challenges of reintegration and the task of implementing the other peace accords. The United Nations should remain committed to assisting them and Guatemalan society as a whole, as it did during the negotiations and the initial stage of the implementation phase of the peace process.

33. Credit for the success achieved in the ceasefire process is also due to the international community which, drawing in particular on the knowledge it had acquired during other peace processes, showed its own determination to put its resources and experience at the service of the demobilization of URNG combatants. In doing so, the representatives of the international community have shown an exceptional degree of cooperation with the parties and among themselves. I should like to acknowledge in particular the role of the European Union, USAID, OAS and the United Nations programmes and agencies that took the lead in providing logistical and other support to the demobilization process, as well as that of the many Governments that contributed to this concerted effort. I trust that this achievement can be emulated in future similar situations and that the implementation of other aspects of the Guatemala peace accords will benefit from this experience.

34. Finally, I should like to pay tribute to all the military and civilian personnel who served with distinction in the military observer group, under the command of its Chief Military Observer, Brigadier-General José B. Rodriguez Rodriguez, and to MINUGUA as a whole, under the leadership of the Head of Mission, Mr. Jean Arnault, for the successful completion of their tasks and the significant contribution they have made to the Guatemalan peace process.

Annex I

Composition and strength of the military observer group attached to MINUGUA

Country	Military observers	Medical personnel
Argentina	5	
Australia	1	
Austria		3
Brazil	18	
Canada	15	
Ecuador	3	
Germany		5
Norway	2	
Russian Federation	3	
Singapore		5
Spain	42[a]	
Sweden	2	
Ukraine	8	
United States of America	5	
Uruguay	20	
Venezuela	8	
Total	132	13
Grand total	145	

[a] Not including the Chief Military Observer.

Annex II

Demobilized personnel of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca

Location	Organization	Number
Abejas	Organización Revolucionaria del Pueblo en Armes (ORPA)	250
Sacol	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR)	642
Claudia I	FAR	342
Claudia II	ORPA/Partido Guatemalteco de los Trabajadores (PGT)	224
Mayalán	Ejercito Guerrero de los Pobres (EGP)	428
Tzalbal	EGP	499
Tululché I	EGP/PGT	285
Tululché II	EGP	258
Total	URNG	2 928

Annex III

Weapons handed over to the United Nations military observer group by members of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca

Type of equipment	Number
Weapons	
Small arms (includes AK-47s, other assault rifles and light machine-guns)	1 665
Crew-served weapons (includes RPGs, mortars and others)	159
Total	1 824
Munitions	
Small-calibre munitions (up to 12 mm)	534 955
Grenades (includes RPGs, mortars and others)	147
Total	535 102

Annex IV

Mines, explosives and other munitions destroyed by members of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca and verified by the United Nations military observer group

Type of device	Number
Mines	1 390
Munitions (includes aviation bombs, rockets and various kinds of grenades)	934
Explosives	1 720 kg
Explosive cords	380 m
Other explosive devices	3 480